

Somerset West
and Taunton

Wellington Place Plan

Adopted 28th March 2023

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LUC



Contents

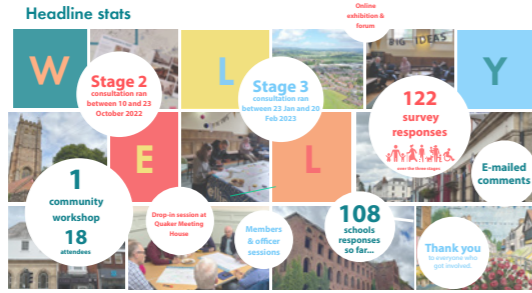
1. Introduction	7
2. Issues and opportunities	29
3. Vision, priorities & spatial strategies	65
4. Growth scenarios	107
5. Next steps	133

Thank you for the involvement of both officers and Members at Somerset West and Taunton Council and Wellington Town Council

Executive summary



Regional context (chapter 1)



Engagement summary (cpt 1)



Landscape character (cpt 2)



Six thematic priorities (cpt 3 and 4)



Spatial strategy plans (cpt 4)



Growth scenarios (cpt 5)

Id	Actions	Objectives	By when	Place	Impact	Cost	Priority
13	Identify boundaries for renewable energy generation opportunities around and within the town			N	D	H	M
14	Undertake a study to explore the potential of the wastelands in Wellington			B	D	H	L
15	Review the potential of the former Diggin Pub for community uses			B	D	H	M
16	Identify the Public Realm Improvement Plan, including the landscape design for new public space in front of the former P&O building			B	D	H	M
17	Establish Digital digital connectivity for existing and new homes and workplaces (see CNCR) by supporting operators and following statutory guidance "Infrastructure for electronic communications Approved Document E"			E	S	H	L
18	Build awareness of support for businesses, available through the Council and the LEP			I	B	L	L
19	Work in partnership with the LEP to support the growth of green economy industries and identify particular opportunities for Wellington			E	D	M	L
20	Identify local renewable energy projects to support a Somerset-wide Renewable Energy Strategy, including the early identification of opportunities for new neighbourhoods with ground source heat pumps, hydro-electric power and community heating networks (see CNCR)			E	D	M	L
21	Develop affordable homes in the town centre: new homes on small sites; and a separate report: properties identified			B	E	H	H

Action Plan (Appendix)

Purpose of the Place Plan

Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) has produced a Place Plan for Wellington comprising a Vision and a Spatial Framework. The Place Plan has been adopted as a material consideration in determining planning applications and considering conservation and regeneration activities in Wellington. The Place Plan is an Evidence Base document which will also shape the new Somerset-wide Local Plan alongside the wider studies and strategies in the existing and emerging evidence base.

Structure of the document

The Place Plan is structured as follows:

- Introduction: Setting the scene for the project including engagement activities.
- Issues and opportunities: Outlining Wellington's rich context including historical analysis, socio-economic character, connectivity and landscape.
- Vision, priorities and spatial strategies: Identification of a vision for Wellington and six key thematic priorities. In addition, this chapter presents a spatial strategy and defines key

projects, guidelines and principles.

- Growth scenarios: Definition and initial qualitative evaluation of a number of potential geographic growth scenarios across Wellington.
- Next steps: Overview of ongoing activities to progress the thinking in the Place Plan, and develop the new Somerset-wide Local Plan.
- Action Plan (Appendix): SWT has prepared an Action Plan which distils the key project priorities.

Responding to context

As part of the Place Plan, we developed a Baseline Report and Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report to help us define an understanding of the key issues and opportunities for Wellington. Key topics include connectivity, landscape and identity, resilience of the town centre and community life, heritage and the environment and sustainability.

Vision and key themes

The Vision: "Wellington will be a successful, welcoming town, clearly rooted in its landscape

setting of the Blackdown Hills, and the proud industrial and commercial heritage at Tonedale Mill and Tone Works"

It is supplemented by six thematic priorities:

1. An accessible place
2. A town rooted in its setting
3. Celebrating our industrial and commercial heritage
4. A high bar for sustainability
5. A welcoming town and centre
6. A resilient town

Spatial strategies

Each of the six thematic priorities has been developed into a spatial strategy. The strategies define spatial priorities, potential projects and guidance in relation to the existing town, and its future growth.

The spatial strategies represent a direction of travel and an initial collation of opportunities. They will need to be progressed and developed via the new Somerset-wide Local Plan, and in partnership with local regeneration and

community partners, landowners and developers.

Growth scenarios

Based on an initial understanding of opportunities and constraints, we have defined a range of potential growth scenarios. These identify a potential range of broad locations and set out some of the key considerations which will help to shape future conversations and dialogue around place-making. Further assessments and evidence base studies will feed into the new Somerset-wide Local Plan, including a comprehensive site allocations process.

Delivery and Action Plan

The indicative Action Plan contains a list of potential actions to realise the vision and objectives set out in the Wellington Place Plan. The Action Plan is a working document, kept under periodic review, along with time-scales for delivery. The Action Plan will progress in alignment with the emerging new Somerset-wide Local Plan.

1 Introduction



Introduction

Wellington is a town with a rich history, impressive landscape setting and strong retail, leisure and employment offer. The town has a market town function for the Somerset West and Taunton District alongside its extensive offer of independent shops and restaurants.

Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) commissioned Allies and Morrison, Avison Young and Land Use Consultants to prepare this Wellington Place Plan, to support decisions around the development, regeneration and conservation of Wellington. The Place Plan will also feed into the evidence base for the new Somerset-wide Local Plan.

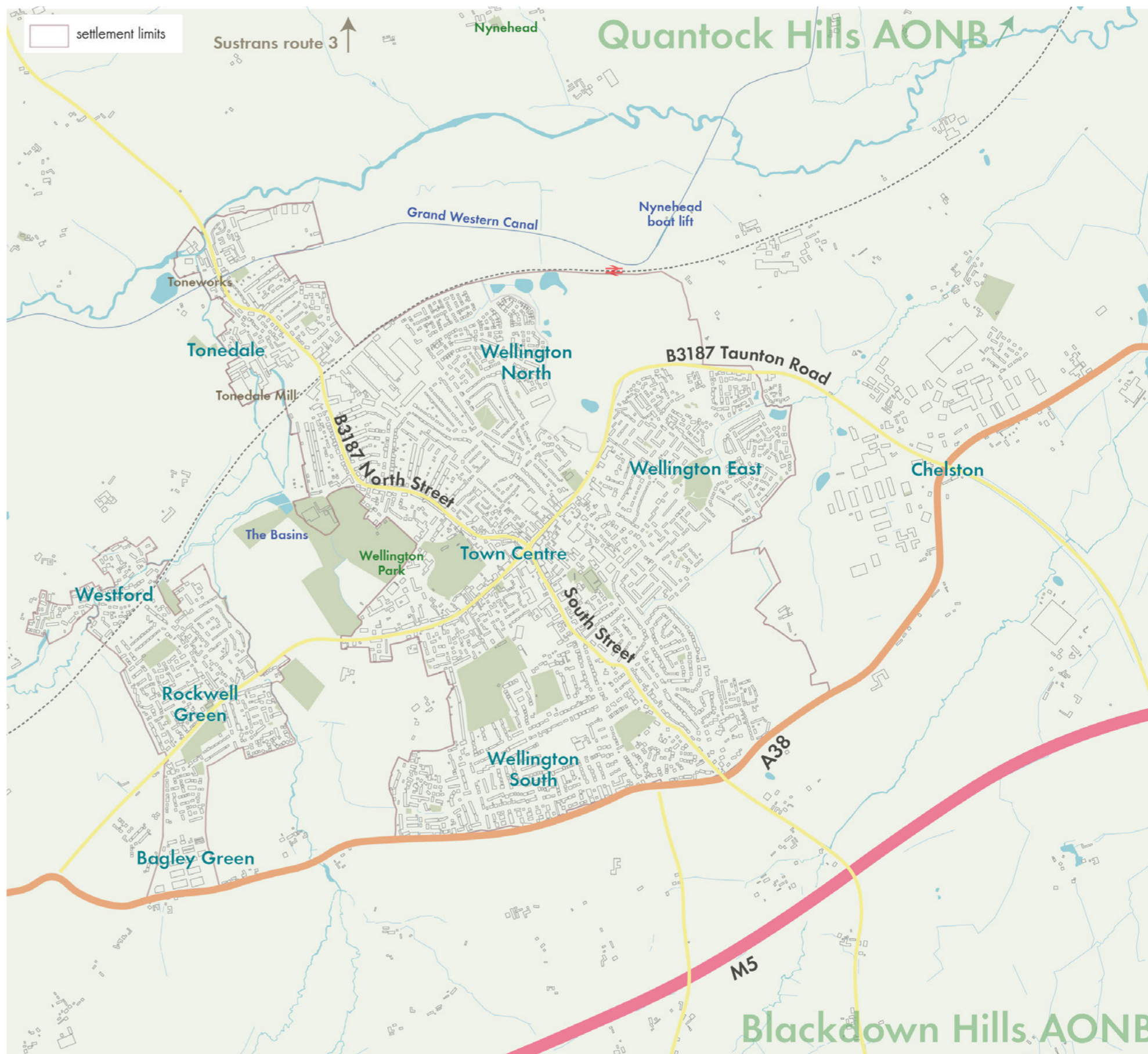
The Wellington Place Plan covers the Parish of Wellington and areas contiguous to the settlement boundaries identified in the Taunton Deane Local Plan (2011-2028). The Plan also acknowledges the role of the town in serving a wider rural hinterland.

The Wellington Place Plan consultation ran from 23rd January to 20 February 2023 and followed a visioning exercise with the community in October 2022. The consultation followed the methods set out in SWT's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The Wellington Place Plan is not a Supplementary Planning Document, but the process and consultation has been in accordance with the requirements for an SPD in order to ensure a thorough and robust process and ensure the agreement of the Plan as policy and a material planning consideration in accordance with best practice. Consultation has been carried out in line with the requirements for the adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Following the consideration of representations received during the consultation in 2023, amendments were made for this final publication. Somerset West and Taunton Council adopted the Wellington Place Plan on 28 March 2023, as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the area of the Plan.

The Place Plan draws together a review of the evidence base, Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, outcomes from the first stage of engagement and the synthesis of a clear vision, themes, spatial plans, principles and projects.



Strategic context

The settlement of Wellington provides an important function in the District as a market town and acts as focus for a rural hinterland which extends into Devon. The town has a significant employment, retail and leisure offering and is the district's secondary centre, after Taunton. The town occupies an attractive setting at the foot of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The city of Exeter is only 28 miles away, a key destination for employment and tertiary education.

The character of Wellington is central to its identity as well as to the quality of life that it offers to residents and the experience that it offers to visitors. It is also important to the economic prosperity of the town, which is home to businesses of all sizes, and the offer to potential investors. The Place Plan seeks to improve the attractiveness and accessibility of the town centre, alongside diversification of its offer.

A key challenge relates to transport management, in the context of a growing town, and the environmental impact of traffic and increasing demands on infrastructure. The anticipated delivery of a new Wellington Railway Station by May 2025 and improvements to local walking and cycling infrastructure should help ease this pressure. The principles and priorities set out in the Place Plan will be progressed as set out in the accompanying Action Plan.

The Place Plan also seeks to address Heritage-at-Risk in the town and to secure new uses and long-term management of these heritage assets in a way which complements Wellington's built heritage and landscape assets.

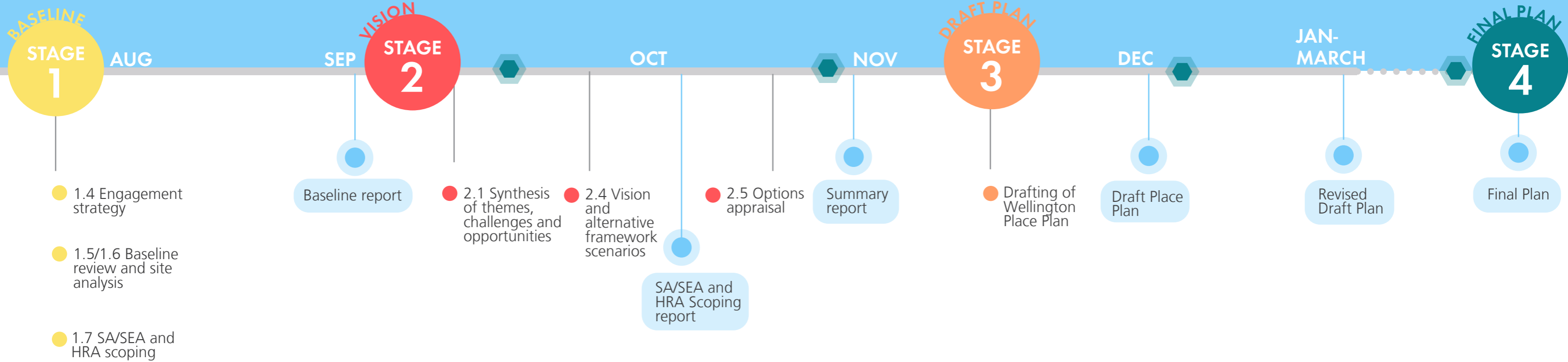


Project programme

This spread summarises the project programme and how engagement feedback has fed into the development of the Place Plan and growth scenarios.

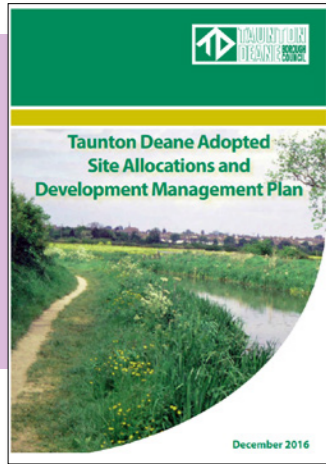
ENGAGEMENT MATERIALS PREP
 INFORMAL ENGAGEMENT (A-F)
 ANALYSIS OF ENGAGEMENT

QUALITY REVIEW PANEL
 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PRESENTATION
 PUBLIC CONSULTATION (4 WKS)



Policy context

This policy context section provided a robust background to the Wellington Place Plan. The documents included within this section were thoroughly reviewed and considered for policy steering on the Wellington Place Plan.



Taunton Deane Adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016)

A Plan that sets out policies and strategic objectives in line with the Core Strategy (themes including water management, employment, retail, design quality etc), as well as descriptions and justifications regarding their alignment with national policy.

The Plan sets out development management policies examining factors such as economic, design and infrastructure. The Plan also sets out spatial, strategic site allocations for mixed-use / residential development for the wider area. Policy WEL1 relates specifically to Wellington: Tonedale Mill.

SWT declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and Ecological Emergency in 2020. In response to this, SWT prepared a **Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) Action Plan**. The CNCR Action Plan identifies a proposed one-year action plan together with route maps for longer term action, and the role that SWT will need to play in delivery. Over 300 potential climate actions are identified to progress over the next ten years as part of SWT's corporate priority of working towards a carbon neutral district and Council by 2030.



Taunton Deane Green Infrastructure Strategy (2009)

A strategy that identifies opportunities for green infrastructure and identifies funding and implementation approaches to support greening throughout the borough. Much of the strategic allocations for the borough are going to be delivered by urban extensions, making the provision and retention of green infrastructure extremely important.

Themes include: open space, access, green links, landscape, ecology, biodiversity, cultural heritage, flooding, and socio-economic issues.

The plan identifies priorities for Wellington:

- Good provision and access to formal parks and gardens, however, a deficiency in access to local open space including town centre, Rockwell Green and Tonedale;
- Lack of safe routes for cycling between Wellington and Taunton.

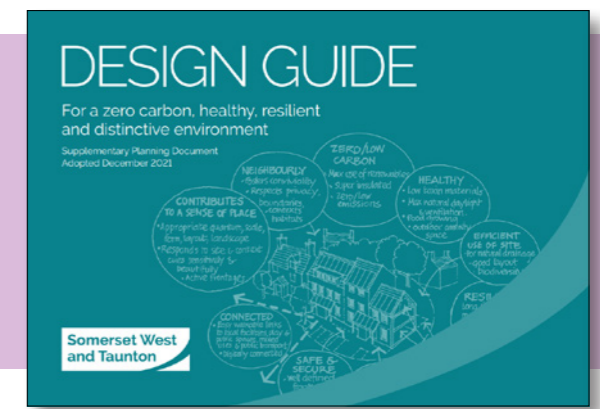
In addition, SWT are preparing a **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** as well as the **Somerset Tree Strategy** which is due to be adopted by the council in March 2023.



Somerset West and Taunton Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan (2020)

The **Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-2028** acknowledges the need for additional pitches in Wellington, and to improve drainage and the quality and capacity of its pitches. The Strategy sets out several options to accommodate demand to 2028, giving key considerations. Additionally, the Strategy highlights sharing issues between clubs, with the cricket ground being shared with the football club. There are linked issues to the provision of football and rugby grass pitches, as well as AGP provision for hockey and for football training in the town. Solutions for these issues will be explored as the Playing Pitch Strategy is developed.

The **Somerset West and Taunton Design Guide** provides design guidance in line with the National Design Guide, following this thematic structure: contributes to a sense of place, neighbourly, zero/low carbon, healthy, efficient use of site, resilient, adaptable, spacious, safe and secure, connected. The Design Guide informs design codes and design briefs, recommending a specific design process to follow for a successful



Somerset West and Taunton Design Guide (2021)

application and project. The guide provides detail on specific aspects of design and architectural features including spatially specific guidance for character areas.

Wellington lies within character area 6: Vale of Taunton Deane. Issues identified in Wellington regarding design:

- Retention and conversion of historic industrial buildings;
- Containing suburban growth and respecting the green setting;
- Erosion of field patterns, meadows, parkland and other green features;
- Flood-sensitive design.

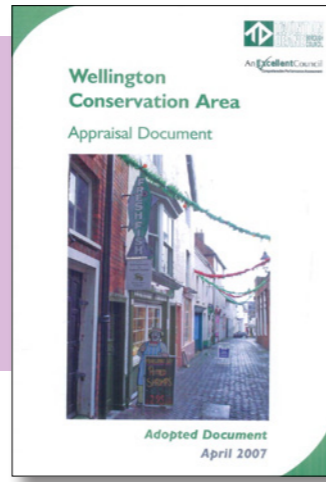
The Design Guide provides a reinterpretation of the town centre's high street, suggesting urban greening, breaking up large blocks and building along organic building lines. The guide picks up on local design and architectural details.



Somerset West and Taunton Economic Development Needs Assessment (2021)

A study drawing together evidence to inform an assessment of potential employment land needs across the Somerset West and Taunton local authority area. Findings:

- The area is home to 88,000 working age people and accommodates for 82,000 jobs;
- Unemployment rates are low and have been declining;
- Employment is well catered for by linkages to neighbouring districts, for example by the M5;
- Major employment growth forecast for: Health, Professional Services, Administrative Services, Education, Arts & Recreation, Accommodation & Food and Construction;
- Future employment sites requirements will be driven by the economic net growth and the need to provide suitable premises for the existing economy.



Wellington Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)

An appraisal defining the area of special historic interest in Wellington town centre, providing a description and evaluation of the historic features' contributions to the environment. Findings:

- The Conservation Area covers the town's main commercial streets and medieval street pattern which is dominated by specialist and independent retailers;
- Wellington has a large proportion of relatively plain but well-built and varied eighteenth-early nineteenth century buildings;
- The Conservation Area contains many listed buildings and is now considered Heritage-at-Risk;
- Factors affecting the Conservation Area:
 - Household alterations
 - Vacancy rates
 - Traffic and parking.



Taunton Green Space Strategy (2014)

A strategy prepared to cover 2010-2015, with key policy drivers relating to the NPPF, Taunton Deane Core Strategy, Play Policy and Play Strategy. This strategy supports the Taunton Deane Adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and provides information based upon plans for future development.

Wellington:

- 72 green spaces in the town and wider area, totalling 64.89 Ha of open space;
- A large proportion of the 64.89Ha comes from outdoor sports facilities (39.2%);
- The provision of green space in the future for Wellington as the population is set to increase to nearly 20,000 people due to strategic developments. Strategic allocations include 52 Ha of land for green spaces associated with this development.



Employment, Retail and Leisure Study (2018)

A study assessing the need for additional land and floor space for employment land, retail and leisure spaces. The Somerset West and Taunton districts were found not to require any additional floorspace for these economic uses due to the low population growth predicted over the plan period.

Wellington:

- Wellington has a strong convenience offer with Waitrose, the Co-operative, Asda and the new Lidl.
- Small independent retailers offering high quality goods to cater to a mid-luxury market.
- Vacancy rates in the centre are higher than the national average.
- The centre is performing well, however, there is room for improvement in enhancing the public realm in the centre and its peripheral streets.

Emerging planning context



Local Plan 2040 Issues and Opportunities Document (2020)

This document was consulted upon for SWT's Local Plan 2040, but has since been put on hold as the Local Government Review for Somerset has taken place (see Section 1 Introduction).

This document sets out: draft objectives; projected issues for the area; and opportunities to address these and meet the objectives.

Findings:

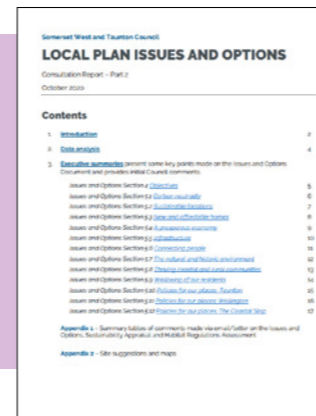
- There is a need to retain the integrity of the retail core providing opportunities for competition and consumer choice.
- Ancillary facilities need to be supported.
- The town centre environment has much room for improvement. There are several public realm projects and preservation projects of historic buildings that would add to these improvements.
- The reopening of the Railway station would encourage public transport use and aid regeneration initiatives of Tonedale Mill and Tone Works.

Objective 1	To ensure all new development works towards the District's "carbon neutrality by 2030" target
Objective 2	To enhance the role of Taunton town centre in the sub-region and to strengthen the function, vitality and self-containment of all our towns
Objective 3	To provide a sufficient and varied supply of high quality and affordable homes to meet the needs of all sections of our communities
Objective 4	To create a prosperous, resilient and entrepreneurial economy ensuring competitiveness across the wider sub-region and attracting the most talented workers to the District
Objective 5	To ensure that new development is supported by essential infrastructure in a timely manner
Objective 6	To achieve a major change in travel behaviour towards walking, cycling and public transport and to reduce the need to travel
Objective 7	To protect and enhance the environmental, historic, economic and wellbeing value of the District's distinctive landscapes biodiversity and local character.
Objective 8	To boost tourism, economic development, agricultural transformation and deliver more affordable homes in our rural and coastal communities
Objective 9	To improve wellbeing, inclusivity and a reduction in inequalities enabling independence and facilitating social interaction

- There are several risks to the heritage assets including changes to doors and windows, vehicle dominance in the centre, infill development.

Policy approaches to support the issues include the following themes:

- Maximising retail frontages.
- Support retail, employment and service uses in strategic land allocations.
- Protection of Tonedale Mill and Tone Works is needed.
- Historic character needs to be retained.



Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Reports 1 & 2 (2020)

The consultation reports set out findings in response to the Issues and Options Consultation, as part of the SWT's Local Plan 2040 review. The first report sets out the general results of these consultations, and the second report assesses these results in much more detail to inform the next stage of drafting for the Local Plan.

Findings:

- The public and stakeholders felt that the Local Plan had appropriate and encouraging objectives.
- The carbon neutrality target should be as soon as possible, suggestions for 2025 instead of 2030. Climate change should be a priority for developer contributions.
- There should be a mix of specifically allocated sites and broad areas for specific renewable energy development.
- The settlement tiers presented seem correct.

- Housing distribution should continue in its current pattern or increase in Wellington / Taunton and reduce in Minehead / other rural centres.
- Affordable homes should be in line with national recommendations of 702 per annum.
- Specific sites should be allocated for allocated for gypsy, traveller and show people communities.
- There should be a defined percentage of accessible and adaptable homes.
- There should be realistic growth ambitions in terms of providing employment.
- Development in rural areas should be managed by effective settlement boundaries.
- Housing in Taunton town centre should be car free and more energy-efficient.

Emerging Local Plan next steps

The new Somerset West and Taunton Council came into being on Monday 1 April 2019 and combined the former West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council into a brand new District council.

Subsequently, in July 2021, the Secretary of State approved a proposal for a new single unitary council to be formed in Somerset, to replace Somerset’s current five councils. The new Somerset Council will come into being on 1 April 2023.

The formation of a unitary council in Somerset will have a significant impact on the way all public services (including planning and the Local Plan) are delivered for years to come. The Local Plan (or its equivalent if changed by central government), will need to be embedded into any new structures and cover the geographical area of the new local authority.

The Wellington Place Plan is an evidence base document which will shape the new Local Plan alongside the wider studies and strategies in the existing and emerging evidence base. The Place Plan is not currently part of the Development Plan. References to potential guidance, projects, priorities and growth scenarios will require further development through the plan-making process. This includes a range of robust evidence base documents and considerations relating to delivery and viability.

The scoping report

LUC have prepared a report that includes a focused assessment of baseline, that will cover the following aspects:

- Climate change
- Population, health and well-being
- Equalities
- Deprivation
- Economy
- Transport
- Water resources including quality and phosphates, supply and flooding
- Landscape
- Soils
- Biodiversity
- Historic environment

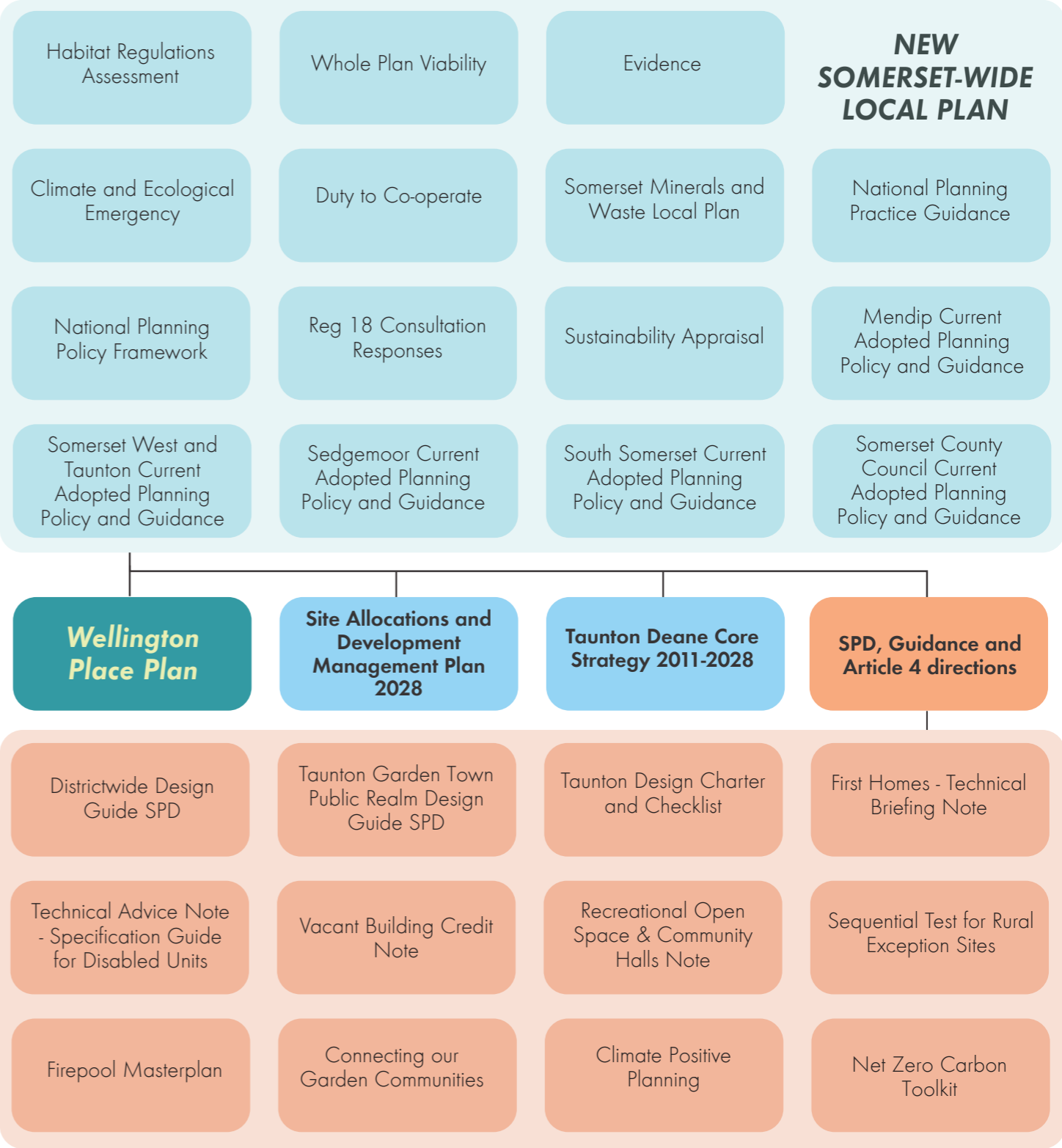


Diagram to show where the Wellington Place Plan sits within the context of the new Somerset-wide Local Plan.

Sites context

This section provides information on:

- Sites that have been allocated for development in the current adopted Taunton Deane Borough Council Core Strategy (2011-2028) (red on the map)
- Sites that have been either identified or allocated as green space (green on the map)

Sites promoted in the call for sites, as part of the Issues and Options Local Plan consultation and through the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), have informed options for potential growth areas in the Place Plan.

The sites information will inform options for potential growth areas in the Place Plan.

Subject to the planning policy process, it is anticipated that existing employment sites and designations would be protected for economic uses, finding opportunities for growth and other employment benefits.

Green Space - Acquired Sites

Land at the basins

Type: Greenfield

Proposals: Expansion to existing allotments; Country Park and Conservation Area; community garden and community sports

Fox's Field (3.44 ha)

Type: Greenfield

Proposals: The land was acquired by SWT in 2019 with the aim to create a forest garden to enhance biodiversity and provide a local community orchard. The site is leased to Wellington Town Council who are working with Wellington Transition Town on the project.

Core Strategy Site Allocations

SS3

Longforth Farm, Wellington (60.4 ha)
Type: Part allocated, Greenfield and Brownfield
Status: Longforth Farm complete, other parts of site have no current planning apps. Bloor Homes area has 503dw completed, areas occupied by Relyon and Swallowfield currently retain existing commercial uses.
Description and Promoted uses: 900 dwellings; 35-40 dph; centre; community, leisure and educational uses; 11 Ha of employment land

SS4

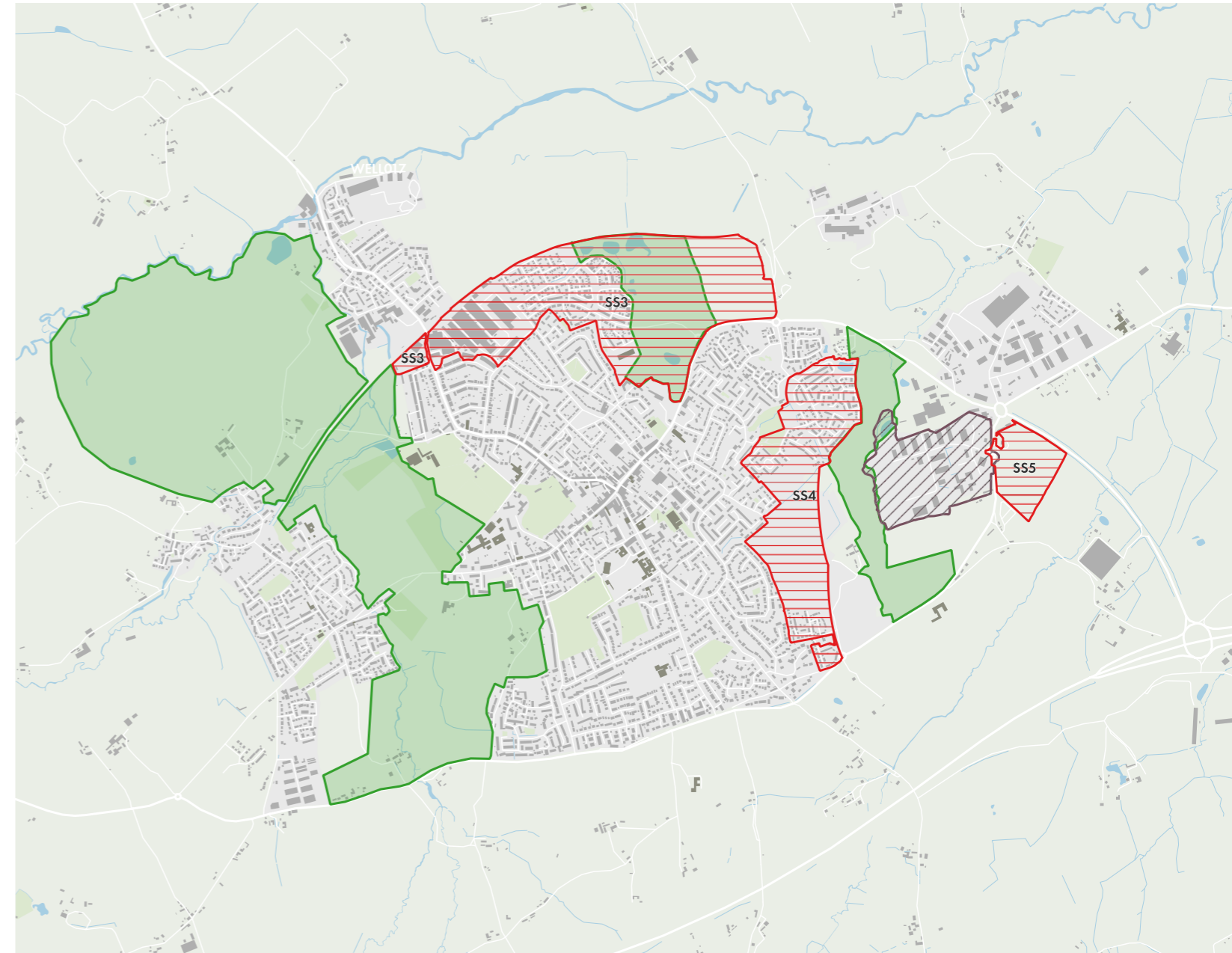
Cades / Jurston, Wellington (33.5 ha)
Type: Allocated, Greenfield
Status: Cades is built out, Jurston under construction with just over half the site granted Reserve Matters permission.
Description and Promoted uses: 900 dwellings; 35-40 dph; community; leisure and educational uses; 30 Ha of green wedge

SS5

Strategic employment site, Chelston (8.67 ha)
Type: Allocated, Greenfield
Status: Not yet progressed
Description and Promoted uses: Employment land use class B1 b & c; B2; B8

WEL1

Tonedale Mill (5.7 ha)
Type: Allocated, Brownfield
Status: Some commercial and leisure elements completed. Recently urgent repairs have been undertaken on the other parts of historic structure. Homes England and Historic England have signed a MoU to focus on Tonedale as a priority site; SWT working with owner to bring forward the site.
Description and Promoted uses: 220 dwellings; mix-used; 1.5Ha of employment land (class B)



LEGEND

- Allocated sites (Red outline)
- Other sites (Hatched outline)
- Wellington green space (Green outline)

Engagement overview

The Place Plan has been informed by a diverse programme of engagement which closed with drop-in events as a part of a formal consultation. Activities took place alongside our review of the evidence base, feeding into our understanding of opportunities, constraints and key priorities. This has shaped a clear set of thematic principles, projects and plans which respond to the main outcomes from a wide range of conversations with different stakeholders and members of the community. Key findings from the engagement activity are set out on pages 57 to 62.



September 2022

October 2022

December 2022

January 2023

Baseline research

Online survey

● Internal ● Members ● Community ● Steering group ● Key work stages

Steering group 1: Sustainability workshop

Officer workshop

Schools engagement

Community workshop

Developing a vision and options

Drafting the Place Plan

Formal public consultation

1-1 discussions - heritage, phosphates, economic development

Members workshop

Drop-in event

Steering group 2: engagement findings

Steering group 3: discussing options

Steering group 4: reviewing draft